



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



QUINN RETIRES

Hughes County Veterans Service Officer Charles Quinn retired from his post November 24 and has opted to relax and enjoy life a little more!

Charles began his service to his country in 1969 when he joined the United States Navy and served until 1973.

He worked as a field service officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs from 1991-2010 and worked as the Hughes County veterans service officer from 2010-2020. In his free time, he volunteered for tribal cultural and religious activities

for the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

"SDDVA is thankful for Charles' years of dedication, hard work and his commitment to our veterans and their families," said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. "We wish Charles the best and hope he enjoys this new chapter in his life!"



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VA SOLID START PROGRAM MAKES STRIDES IN FIRST YEAR

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, as [VA Solid Start](#) celebrates its one year anniversary — the Veterans Benefits Administration connected with nearly 70,000 newly-separated service members.

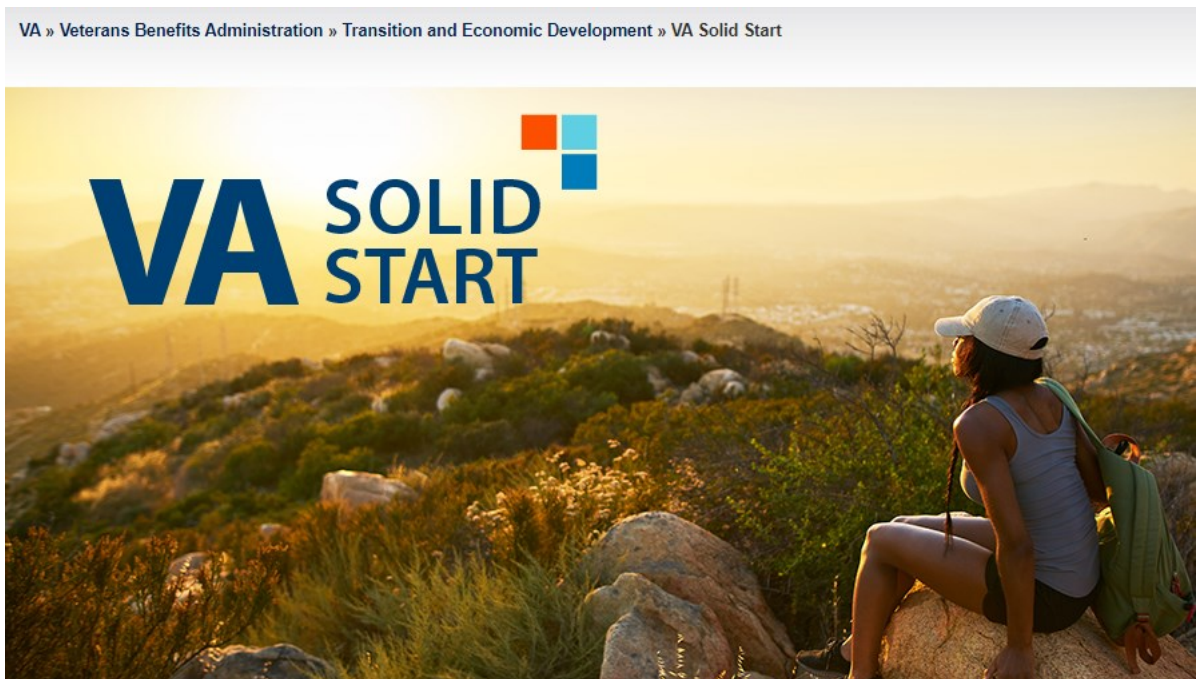
Annually, the program aims to proactively contact veterans three times during their first year of transition from military to civilian life at the 90-, 180- and 360-day mark after separation.

“The Department’s efforts have been effective,” said

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Approximately 124,000 service members separated from the military in fiscal year 2020, and nearly 60% of those veterans called, answered — resulting in VA connecting recently separated veterans to earned VA benefits, including, helping veterans in crisis immediately connect with Suicide Prevention Specialists.”

The VA, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and Homeland Security, launched VA Solid Start December 2019 in response to Executive Order (EO) 13822: Supporting Our Veterans During Their Transition from Uniformed Service to Civilian Life. The EO was issued to improve transitioning service members’ mental health care and access to suicide prevention resources in the year following discharge, separation or retirement.

If a veteran has separated from the military in the past 90 days and has not been contacted by [VA Solid Start](#), call 1-800-827-1000 to reach a highly training VA Solid Start representative.



SFVAHCS PROVIDING NEW SHUTTLE SERVICE FOR VETERANS

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System is providing a new shuttle service to assist veterans and their caregivers between the parking lot and the main facility entrance. Hours of operation are Monday—Friday from 7:00 am—4:00 pm (CT).

Several reserved parking spots are available in the main parking lot. After parking their vehicle, veterans should call the number on the sign and a health aid will take their information and conduct COVID screening questions. A health aid will then greet them at their vehicle to assist them into the medical center.

After their visit, veterans should stop at the information desk near the front entrance and a health aid will assist them to their vehicle.

For additional information regarding this service, please contact Dina Hohn, Supervisor Intake Section, at 605-336-3230 EXT. 6075.

COMMUNICATING WITH OUR HEROES AT STATE VETERANS HOME

SDDVA has added a new feature on our website for our heroes at the State Veterans Home.

The new feature, “send a note,” allows family and friends to send a quick electronic message to their hero at the Home.

Due to the pandemic challenges, no visitors are allowed into the Home at this time. So, ‘sending a note’ offers everyone the opportunity to send a quick note. Staff will print off the message and forward it to the respective resident. Generic thinking of you messages can be sent to all residents at the Home. Staff will post those messages on the internal messaging board on their TVs.

Visit: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome/default.aspx>

SEND A NOTE!

Send a note to a resident
and/or staff member of the
SD Veterans Home

VA RECOGNIZED FOR IMPACT ON LIVES OF BLUE WATER NAVY VETERANS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals has awarded the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Blue Water Navy (BWN) communications and outreach campaign with a 2020 MarCom Platinum Award.

The campaign increased awareness about the BWN Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 which extended the presumption of exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange to veterans who served in the off-shore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

“The VA supports BWN Veterans, their families, and survivors

around the country,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilke. “Ensuring veterans and their families are aware of the benefits available to them is a priority and this campaign demonstrates our commitment to serving our Vietnam Era Veterans.”

In fiscal year 2020, VBA’s BWN campaign included a national public service announcement (PSA) that aired more than 20,000 times with an estimated advertisement equivalency of \$1.9 million, more than 30,000 landing page views and over 300,000 PSA views on YouTube. Additionally, the digital advertising portion of the campaign reached 328,000-plus Facebook users and 2.3 million YouTube users.

As of Oct. 31, the VA processed 36,820 of 72,969 claims received, of which 25,918 were granted — awarding more than \$696 million in retroactive benefits to eligible veterans and their families. The most common claims granted included conditions such as type 2 diabetes, malignant growth of the lung, coronary bypass surgery, malignant growths of genitourinary system, and coronary artery disease.



WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA PROGRAM SET

The South Dakota Funeral Directors Association will again participate in Wreaths Across America, a national program which pays tribute to fallen veterans of all wars during the Christmas season. A formal wreath presentation will be held at the Flaming Fountain Veterans Memorial on Capitol Lake in Pierre at 11:00 AM (Central Time) on Monday, December 14, 2020. The theme for 2020 is "Be An American Worth Fighting For".

The Wreaths Across America (WAA) story began in 1992 when a wreath-maker from Maine had 5,000 extra wreaths. Rather than letting them go to waste, he gave the wreaths as a gift of thanks for the service and sacrifice made by our nation's military so he could live freely to

work and raise his family. Morrill Worcester could never have foreseen then how this simple gesture would ignite a passion in the hearts and souls of millions of Americans many years later. The Worcester Wreath Company, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization since 2007, from Harrington, Maine, began this tradition of placing wreaths on the headstones of our Nation's fallen heroes at Arlington National Cemetery during the holidays.

The Wreaths Across America's mission is to Remember, Honor, and Teach. Remember our fallen U.S. veterans, honor those who serve including their families who sacrifice, and teach children the value of the freedoms we enjoy each day.

Major General Jeffrey P. Marlette, The Adjutant General of South Dakota, is the featured speaker this year.



SD CARES HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Temporary Rental, Mortgage or Utility Assistance

WHAT IS THE SD CARES HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

The SD CARES Housing Assistance Program provides funds to assist South Dakota residents with housing expenses. If you have been financially impacted due to COVID-19, the SD CARES Housing Assistance Program (SDCHAP) may provide temporary rental, mortgage, or utility assistance.

Assistance provided is not a loan and does not have to be paid back. Payment is made directly to the landlord, mortgage servicer or utility provider on the applicant's behalf. Funding amount is based on need with a maximum of \$1,500 per month.

Eligible applicants can earn up to 115 percent of the area median income (AMI) and funds can be used to cover arrears back to March 1 and current housing expenses that a household is unable to pay. Assistance can only be provided through December 30, 2020.

PROGRAM INFORMATION



ALLOCATION AMOUNT
\$10,000,000



RECIPIENTS

South Dakotans who have lost income due to COVID-19 and owe past due rent, mortgage or utilities.



MAXIMUM GRANT
\$1500 per month



APPLICATION DEADLINE

December 18, 2020 or sooner if funding is expended.

DO I QUALIFY?

- ☒ Owe past due rent, mortgage or utilities or unable to pay current housing expenses due to being financially impacted by COVID-19;
- ☒ Have incomes at or below 115% of AMI;
 - 1 person – \$62,675
 - 2 person – \$71,530
 - 3 person – \$80,500
 - 4 person – \$89,470
 - 5 person – \$96,600
 - 6 person – \$103,730
 - 7 person – \$110,975
 - 8 person – \$118,105
- ☒ Be a South Dakota resident;
- ☒ Meet all program criteria; and
- ☒ Ensure a complete application

HOW TO APPLY

Potential applicants can visit sdcareshousingassistance.com to verify eligibility requirements and to begin the application process. Online applications are mobile friendly and will be processed by partnering agencies throughout the state. Should applicants not have internet access, partnering agencies listed below are available to help households complete an application.

PARTNERS

Helpline Center
 Codington County Welfare
 Four Bands Community Fund, Inc.
 Grow South Dakota
 Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership
 Lakota Funds
 Mazaska Owecaso Otipi Financial
 NeighborWorks Dakota Home Resources
 Pennington County Health & Human Services
 Rural Office of Community Services, Inc.
 Western SD Community Action



HAVE QUESTIONS:

SDHDA @ 800.540.4241 | Helpline Center @ 211



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec 8—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Dec 14—Wreath Laying Ceremony—Capitol Lake Flaming Fountain—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)

Dec 15—SDDVA Mini Conference via ZOOM—10:00 am (CT)

Dec 24-25—State Offices are closed

Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

2021

Apr 9-10—DAV State Convention—Rushmore Hotel and Suites—Rapid City

DON'T

FORGET

The next SFVHA Stakeholders call is scheduled for next Wednesday, December 9, at 10:30 am (CT).

Dial into the call at 800-767-1750, Access code 72243.

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/default.html>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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